

**PRAYING THE PRAYERS OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT
CHURCH**

20 PRAYERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Ephesians 1:17-19

Ephesians 3:16-21

Acts 4:29-30

Luke 10:2

Romans 15:5-6

Romans 15:13

Ephesians 6:19-20

Philippians 1:9-11

Colossians 1:9-12

Colossians 4:2-4

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

1 Thessalonians 5:23

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

2 Thessalonians 3:5

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Hebrews 13:20-21

2 Peter 1:2

3 John v2

Introduction

As we look at each of these prayers, we will consider the context of the prayer, the content of the prayer, and what this prayer may result in.

There are many powerful effects of praying these prayers of the New Testament:

1. We know we are praying in agreement with the apostles and with God's word.
2. We will grow in understanding of these prayers as we repeatedly make use of them in prayer.
3. Our inner life is being built up continually as we pray these words.
4. The church, the body of Christ, is also being strengthened as we pray in this way.
5. We are familiarising ourselves with the heart of God as revealed through his apostles.

We will note that the focus of these prayers is almost wholly on the building up and equipping of believers. As we, as God's people, are more greatly affected in these ways, we will become more effective in making Jesus known in our world.

At the end there is a 30-day plan for praying these prayers. In this we repeat the first three a few times as we believe they are foundational, and pray each of the others once, finishing by repeating Luke 10:2. This plan and these prayers could be practised in various ways and rhythms, but it is our suggestion that these prayers be used on a continual basis.

We have included one prayer instruction from the gospel of Luke as the early believers would surely have prayed this regularly. There is the one recorded prayer from the book of Acts, and the rest are all from the letters of the New Testament. We have not included the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) as it would require a whole other booklet and there are many resources already on this prayer.

We have quoted the prayers in the English Standard Version of Scripture.

Ephesians 1:16-19

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might.

The Context: Ephesians 1:1-14

Paul has outlined in the most wonderful terms the incredible spiritual blessings we have in Christ Jesus! Having heard of the believer's faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for all God's people, Paul keeps on praying that they would come into the full revelation and experiential knowledge of all they have in Christ.

The Content:

This prayer, directed to the Father of glory, is that he would give to us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we might know him more fully. To know who he is, as he has revealed himself, and to know his ways. To understand what he has done, is doing, and will do. Paul acknowledges that the eyes of hearts have been enlightened in Christ but do need to shine brighter and brighter until the fullness of day (see Proverbs 4:18). There follows a threefold outcome from this enlightening of our hearts: to know the hope of our calling; to know the riches of Christ's inheritance in us; and to know the immeasurable greatness of his power to, for, and at work in us. Jesus is bringing many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10) and we as his sons (male and female) are his glorious inheritance! We might understand this prayer to be that we would know and live in a fuller apprehension of the eternal hope and purpose of Christ in us, and the unlimited power at work to bring this to completion.

The result of this prayer is that we, as the body of Christ, might know the fullness of him. To know by revelation and wisdom from the Holy Spirit the unsearchable riches of Christ (3:8) which cannot be fully known or measured by human means.

Ephesians 3:14-19

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith — that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

The Context: Paul begins with the phrase ‘For this reason’ which he also wrote at the start of chapter three. What we found outlined in chapters one and two is the context of this prayer, that is the spiritual blessings we have in Christ, the grace that has saved us, and the making of one new man (2:15) through his blood shed on the cross, whereby we are included in God’s people and have access to his throne of grace.

So, it is because of all that Christ has done for us and opened up to us that Paul prays this prayer. He bows the knee in humble reverence to the Father who names us all. Paul prays, therefore, with an understanding of who God the Father is, what Jesus Christ has accomplished on our behalf, and who the Father says we are giving us a new identity and a true defining of our lives in Christ.

The Content: Verses 16-19 are packed with rich meaning which will only be more fully grasped as we repeatedly pray this prayer into our lives. We could give a breakdown of the prayer as follows:

The Source: The riches of God’s glory and the power of the Holy Spirit (v16)

The Request: That from this source we would be strengthened in our inner being, that is that we would receive an increase in our capacity to receive and take hold of all Christ has given to us (v16)

The Purpose: That Christ would dwell, reside and remain, in our hearts through faith, and we would together with all God’s people comprehend, grasp, and lay hold of the full dimensions of all Christ has opened to us. That this would then enable us to experientially know his love (that we are already rooted and established in) that is beyond human comprehension, and so be filled with all the fullness of God (v17-19)

The Result: That according to his power at work in us and energising us, he would do abundantly beyond what we ask or think, in order to bring glory to God.

Acts 4:29-30

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

The context: Acts 3-4

The Lord has worked a great miracle of healing through Peter and John, providing the opportunity to share the message of Jesus, and a large number of people are responding in faith (4:4). The religious authorities are perturbed by this and arrest Peter and John. They question them and threaten them to intimidate and prevent them testifying about Jesus. The two apostles respond saying that they cannot stop speaking of what they have seen and heard (4:20), and then leaving them they gather their friends and join in prayer together.

The Content: They begin praying by recognising who God is and what he has done, and acknowledge how the Scriptures are fulfilled that speak of the peoples and rulers gathering against the Lord and his Anointed One (verses 23-28). As they also are experiencing this opposition, they now pray the heart of this prayer in verses 29-30.

An expanded version:

“And now, Lord, look upon and consider their threats to silence us and grant to your bondservants (those who fully belong to Jesus) to continue to speak your word with all and complete boldness, confidence, clarity, and freedom and ease of speech, while you stretch out your hand to heal and for healing and signs and wonders to be performed through the name (authority) of your holy servant Jesus.”

They are praying and asking that they would be enabled to keep on speaking for Jesus through God giving them Spirit-inspired boldness (this word has rich and various aspects but was essentially a freedom to speak as one should without any restriction). They have recognised that healing miracles and signs and wonders which they have experienced and witnessed in Acts 2 and 3 bring about great opportunity to speak the testimony of Jesus, and so they ask for these to continue as a means of aiding their unrestricted witness.

The result of this prayer is that the very place where they met is shaken, they are all filled with the Holy Spirit, and do indeed continue to speak the word of God with boldness (4:31).

Luke 10:2

And he (Jesus) said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest field.”

The Context: Having sent out the twelve on mission, Jesus is now about to send out seventy-two others. Jesus perceives the great extent of possible fruit (see also John 4:35) and recognises the need for more workers.

The Content: This is an instruction to pray rather than a prayer itself. The challenge is to pray earnestly that is to ask or implore with a heartfelt cry because of a great need. We pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers. The word translated ‘send out’ implies a forceful removal or authoritative sending. It means to cast out or thrust into something. These labourers are to go into the Lord’s harvest field.

The Result: Those who were instructed to pray are then sent out themselves. They go entering houses, bringing a blessing of peace, healing the sick, and announcing the kingdom of God.

Romans 15:5-6

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Context: Paul has been discussing what was a thorny issue for some in the early churches, namely clean and unclean foods. He appeals to this diverse group of believers not to pass judgement on others or to make others stumble in their faith.

The Content: Paul addresses this prayer to ‘the God of all endurance and encouragement,’ that is the One who keeps us going in his good direction. The heart of the prayer is that we, as diverse believers from various backgrounds, would live in harmony, that is a mindset that is submitted to God and his word, and has a shared perspective on God’s glory not our opinions and preferences.

The Result: The desired result is ultimately to glorify God and to do this by speaking with one voice that is in accord with the mind of Christ Jesus (see Philippians 2:1-5).

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

The Context: Paul is quoting Old Testament texts to explain how the Gentiles, 'having no hope and without God' (Ephesians 2:12) now have received mercy and a sure hope through Christ.

The Content: Again, Paul highlights an aspect of who God is – the God of hope. The heart of the prayer is that we would be filled by God with all joy and peace, two great fruits of the Spirit that flow from God's love. This joy and peace will fill us as we believe and put our trust in him.

The Result: Having been filled we will now abound and overflow with this hope, from the God of hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us. This then would be a great testimony to those around our world who might then ask us the reason for such a hope that is in us (see 1 Peter 3:15).

Ephesians 6:19-20

[Pray] also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

The Context: As Paul comes to the end of this letter which he has written while in prison, he makes a personal request for the believers' prayers on his behalf. Notice that he doesn't ask for his release or good treatment, but to fearlessly make Jesus known.

The Content: Paul values their prayers that he would speak boldly, openly, fearlessly, and clearly – the same word as we find in Acts 4:29. He asks that just the right words would be given to him to proclaim, that is to make known or to declare, the 'mystery of the gospel.' The mystery refers to the message, once hidden, but now revealed that Jesus died and rose again to save and bring together both Jew and Gentile.

Paul sees himself as an ambassador, that is a representative of Christ even though he is in chains, for the message itself cannot be chained. Again, he emphasises speaking boldly in verse 20, which Paul did from beginning to end of his ministry (see Acts 9:20, 27; 28:30-31). We pray this prayer both for ourselves and all others who speak the message of Jesus in various ways.

The Result: Paul's faith became known throughout the whole imperial guard, and caused other believers to become more confident to speak the word without fear (see Philippians 1:12-14). May all around us know of our faith in Jesus, and may our testimony instil fearlessness in other believers today.

Philippians 1:9-11

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

The Context: Paul, with Timothy alongside him, writes to the church in Philippi. He begins with his customary greeting, then expresses his thanks and appreciation for these believers and their partnership in the gospel. The apostle expresses great affection for them.

The Content: Paul's prayer is that their love will abound, and that they will express this well and wisely. This will lead them to approve, that is test and examine to determine the true worth and genuineness of what is excellent, that is what surpasses other things, and carries through to fulfilment. This in turn will lead to these believers walking in purity and without blame or causing offence, that is living with an inner integrity that works out in a life that will not cause others to stumble.

The Result: That they would be filled with the fruit of righteousness, displaying the character and nature of Christ, resulting in glory and praise to God. As our love abounds and is displayed well, and as we give ourselves to God's best, walking in an inoffensive manner, and showing forth the fruit of Christ's righteousness, so the testimony of Jesus will be received and God glorified.

Colossians 1:9-12

We have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

The Context: As in the letter to the Philippians, Paul begins this epistle with his greeting followed by thanksgiving for their faith, love, and witness. Then, in line with that, he prays this rich prayer for their continued growth in Christ. The opening line again reveals Paul's continual prayers for the churches.

The Content: The heart of the prayer is for the believers to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, and a recognition that this comes through spiritual means, both wisdom and understanding. Then the prayer moves to how they might live out the will of God. Paul's desire is that they walk in a manner that is worthy of the Lord, living in a way that fully pleases God. Also, that they bear fruit in every good work, and that in so doing they will continue to increase in an experiential knowledge of God. This can only come about as the believers are strengthened with the power of the Spirit and so keep persevering with both patience and joy as they live in gratitude and thanksgiving to God for all he has done for them in Christ.

The Result: Having been delivered from the domain of darkness, we now live in the kingdom of God's beloved Son. As we understand his will more fully, we will express this in a life lived after Christ's pattern that bears the fruit of his kingdom reign on earth.

Colossians 4:2-4

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison — that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

The Context: Paul has written the main content of his letter, and before giving some personal greetings and instructions to individuals, he now adds a final instruction around two key areas: prayer and declaring Jesus to people.

The Content: This is not so much a prayer, but a request for prayer which gives insight into what Paul considered of prime importance. It begins with a call to be devoted to and steadfast in prayer, being both watchful and thankful. Then he outlines the requests, firstly, for an open door for the word of God, and secondly, that Paul would make it clear, that is to reveal the word openly, making it apparent to his hearers.

The Result: That there would be open doors for Paul, despite opposition and imprisonment, but also open doors for all believers to speak the good news of Jesus (4:5-6), and that this message would be presented with clarity not confusion, through lives that exemplify Christ's wisdom and grace.

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

The Context: As Paul writes to the Thessalonian believers, he expresses his deep longing for them to keep growing in faith, and his strong desire to see them face to face. He prays intensely and continually that he may see them and input to them anything that is lacking in their faith.

The Content: This prayer is formed of two requests of the Lord. First, that God would direct our way to you, that is to make a fully straight path without any deviation or delay. Second, that the Lord would make their love increase and abound for one another and for all people. We might pray that the Lord would direct us to the people we can supply something to add to their faith, and he would direct people to us who can input into our lives in this way. Above all, we pray our love, the love with which God first loved us, would increase in us and overflow from us.

The Result: This will lead to the establishing of our hearts, that is a divinely enabled stability and steadfastness that equips us to advance in obedience, endurance, and hopeful expectation. This also leads to us walking blamelessly in holiness before God.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Context: As Paul comes to the end of his letter to this church he pronounces this blessing over them.

The Content: The prayer is directed to the God of peace. When we know and live in the peace of God, we are more ready and aligned to receive all that he wants to do in us. Paul prays that the believers will be sanctified completely, that is set apart for Christ and made distinctive from the prevailing culture. He prays that their whole being will be kept blameless, that is without fault or defect, in a life of integrity against which no accusation will hold. Christ is our sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:30), and in him we have been sanctified, are being sanctified, and will be sanctified.

The Result: That Jesus will return for a pure bride, made ready, with no attachment to the spirit of this age, but wholly his.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfil every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Context: Paul, Silas, and Timothy, as an apostolic team, are writing to the Thessalonian church. They are encouraging them to have hope and confidence in the coming return and righteous judgements of Christ, despite the suffering and trials that they are going through.

The Content: The prayer is twofold. First, that God would make these believers to live worthy of their calling in Christ, that is that they would express behaviour consistent with their new identity as saints in the Lord. This is not about trying to be better, but realising who God says we are, and having recognised that to live by his grace in a consistent manner with this God-given identity and purpose.

Second, that God would fulfil, that is to fill up for accomplishing and completing, all our Spirit inspired desires that line up with the will of God, along with every work or action that comes from our faith in Jesus. All this comes through the grace and power of God at work within us.

The Result: That the name of Jesus will be glorified and held in high regard through our lives. Also, as we live in union with Christ, and as we glorify him so we are glorified in some way too. The experience of much of the New Testament church was both suffering persecution but also being well-thought of as they displayed the outworking of God's grace in their lives (see Acts 2:47; 5:13).

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

The Context: The apostles are encouraging and commending these believers for standing firm in their faith in the midst of lawlessness, deception, and corruption in the world around them.

The Content: This prayer highlights who they are praying to, and what the Lord has done for his people. We pray to the Father who loves us, gives us eternal comfort and good hope through the grace of Jesus Christ. It vital to recognise and acknowledge this and take time to focus on the One we call upon in prayer.

The prayer then is for the hearts of the believers, that they would be comforted, that is encouraged by the one who comes alongside of us affirming that we belong to God and have been made righteous in Christ. Also, that their hearts would be established, that is to be fixed firmly, supported, and strengthened in every good work and word, that is in all that they do and speak.

The Result: That the believers will stand firm, holding to all of the apostolic teaching and manner of life.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honoured, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

The Context: As the apostles (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) come towards the end of their letter, they ask these believers to pray for them for their ongoing mission.

The Content: There are two main requests here. First, that the word of the Lord, that is the good news message of Jesus Christ, would speed ahead and be honoured as it was among the Thessalonians. The first word used here means simply to run, which speaks of swift forward motion in a rapid and urgent manner. The second word translated as honour is the word for glory, and can mean to be valued and held in high esteem.

The second prayer request is that the apostles will be delivered from wicked and evil men. The word deliver means to rescue and is the same word as used in the Lord's prayer, "Deliver us from evil." Paul and his team faced much opposition, and though they were at times rescued out of situations, other times they were arrested and imprisoned, but their hope was that in every situation they would not be restricted from making Jesus known. The wicked and evil men were those who were out of line with the way of God and who acted maliciously. Mostly they were religious people who were vehemently opposed to the apostles' message.

The Result: That many more people would believe in Jesus, and the apostolic mission will continue to spread.

2 Thessalonians 3:5

**May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God
and to the steadfastness of Christ.**

The Context: Paul, Silas, and Timothy have requested prayer for themselves, and confirmed their trust in God's faithfulness, and the obedience of these believers.

The Content: This short prayer contains the word used in the prayer of 1 Thessalonians 3:11 that the Lord would direct, that is make straight and guide their hearts firstly into the love of God. This is such a beautiful thought of our hearts, the very core of our being, being continually directed into the love of God the Father that we might always live conscious of his love for us, in us, and through us. Secondly that he would direct our hearts into Christ's steadfastness, that is endurance, patience, and perseverance, where we have a Spirit-empowered tenacity that gives us a cheerful and hopeful consistency.

The Result: As the believers know God's love in their living experience so they will stay the course in Christ till the end.

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.

The Context: This prayer is a final blessing at the close of this letter to the Thessalonians.

The Content: The prayer is directed to the God of peace; this being emphasised by the word 'himself.' The request is that God will impart the attribute of his peace into our lives, not just on certain occasions, but at all times and in every way. It is a comprehensive peace that can envelop our whole being, and in turn enables us to permeate life around us with this peace. This peace, which the apostles would understand from the Hebrew 'Shalom', means wholeness, security, and well-being. The prayer links the peace of God with the presence of God.

The Result: Those who trust in Christ Jesus can live at peace in all situations, and demonstrate his peace in ways that would draw others to the God of peace.

Hebrews 13:20-21

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The Context: This prayer comes at the close of the book of Hebrews, a letter written to Jewish believers outlining the supremacy of Jesus Christ as the fullest and ultimate revelation of God.

The Content: Verse 20 gives a detailed view of who God is, what he has done in raising Jesus, who Jesus is as our great shepherd, and the means of our redemption through his blood of the eternal covenant. This speaks of the peace, power, protection, and provision of the Lord.

Verse 21 expresses the prayer for the church to be equipped, that is fully trained, made fit and ready for the purposes of God, and to be adjusted and aligned with the Lord; being equipped with everything good that we need so that we may do his will. Then, the prayer is that the Lord would work in us, that is accomplish in and through us that which is pleasing in his sight. This also means that which is agreeable, in other words working in us that which agrees with the life and expressions of Jesus Christ.

The Result: As we do the will of God in a way that is pleasing to God so this brings glory to Jesus Christ for ever!

2 Peter 1:2

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

The Context: Peter is writing from a Roman prison probably not long before being executed for his faith. He writes to a network of churches beginning this letter with this prayer of blessing.

The Content: Peter writes a blessing for the two great gifts of God's grace and peace for the believers. This was a common greeting at the beginning of most New Testament letters. Peter prays this will be multiplied to them, that is they will have it in abundance and to the fullest measure. Also, that these qualities of God may increase among them and spread in effect. Grace and peace in our lives are initiated and sustained by God. So, it is in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord that we keep receiving and increasing in grace and peace. As we know who he is, that he reigns over all, and his complete and ultimate victory we live in the greater measure of grace and peace. Peter would have been experiencing this himself even while imprisoned and awaiting death.

The Result: God's grace and peace become sustaining factors in our lives determining our response in all situations and circumstances, and towards all people.

3 John v2

Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.

The Context: The apostle John is writing to his dear friend Gaius whom he addresses several times with the term 'beloved.'

The Content: John prays that his friend will prosper, that is that things will go well for him. The word used has the sense of having a good journey. He also prays that he would be in good health, that everything would be in good working order in his body even as his soul is well in the Lord. This prayer of blessing is that we would have a good journey through life with all our physical and mental capacities working in good, God designed order.

The Result: As all is well with our souls in Christ, so that wellness flows into our life journey and into our full health.

30-day plan:

1. Ephesians 1:17-19
2. Ephesians 3:16-21
3. Acts 4:29-30
4. Luke 10:2
5. Romans 15:5-6
6. Romans 15:13
7. Ephesians 6:19-20
8. Philippians 1:9-11
9. Ephesians 1:17-19
10. Ephesians 3:16-21
11. Acts 4:29-30
12. Colossians 1:9-12
13. Colossians 4:2-4
14. 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13
15. 1 Thessalonians 5:23
16. Ephesians 1:17-19
17. Ephesians 3:16-21
18. Acts 4:29-30
19. 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12
20. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17
21. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2
22. 2 Thessalonians 3:5
23. Ephesians 1:17-19
24. Ephesians 3:16-21
25. Acts 4:29-30
26. 2 Thessalonians 3:16
27. Hebrews 13:20-21
28. 2 Peter 1:2
29. 3 John v2
30. Luke 10:2